

# CBS News: myth a minute

Approved For Release 2005/01/12 : CIA-RDP88-01315R000400260034-6

CBS news correspondent Hughes Rudd, during the airing of "The Business of Newspapers," professed to perceive an "odd and rather sinister" development in the news industry.

That "odd and rather sinister" development of which Rudd spoke was the concentration of power in the hands of a few newspaper chains. The trouble is, he trained the CBS electronic eye on the wrong target.

It is the concentration of news-shaping power in the hands of the network few which alarms us — and ought to alarm all Americans.

Using that power, the networks can pass off as "objective" reporting such programs as "The Business of Newspapers."

Rudd, that folksy eminence of electronic journalism, told a television audience Friday night that he felt a little uneasy from time to time because he had left print journalism for the lure of the camera.

There are times when those of us who remain in our inky trenches ought to feel not a little grateful that Mr. Rudd chose as he did. We did, Friday night, for example, during the CBS news special "The Business of Newspapers," which Mr. Rudd hosted.

Because in the nine minutes Mr. Rudd and his associates of CBS devoted to us in Panax newspapers, we counted no fewer than six major errors and several minor ones.

- Rudd said a Panax editor was fired because he refused to front-page two stories sent from Panax headquarters. That is not true. The editor was fired because he refused to accept the principle that the boss is entitled the final say as a matter of principle. No Panax editor was fired for refusing those — or any other — stories.

It is surprising that Mr. Rudd would broadcast this oft-repeated error inasmuch as the editor himself acknowledged, right there on Mr. Rudd's own cameras, what really had happened.

- Rudd said the two stories had been sent by John McGoff, Panax president. That is not true. Mr. McGoff, in fact, was out of the country at the time and learned of the stories — and the surrounding flap — only when he returned.

- Rudd said the two stories were sent with orders they be run on the front page. That is not true. They were sent with the suggestion they be used "front page if possible." The fact is that a number of editors chose to ignore both stories altogether and none of them was disciplined in any way whatsoever.

- Rudd said the two stories in question were characterized as "shoddy and irresponsible" by Sigma Delta Chi, the professional journalism society. That is not true. In fact, they were so characterized by the editor of the society's magazine, in a column he wrote without so much as bothering to check with Panax. There are those, we suppose, who might even call that shoddy and irresponsible journalism.

By the by, the essential point of one of the stories in question was confirmed later by none less than James Earl Carter — on nationwide television!

- Rudd said neither Panax nor its president, John McGoff, would consent to discuss the matter with him. Strangely, Mr. Rudd failed to say that Mr. McGoff had wasted an entire morning, July 11, 1977, on the film-

ing of a 45 minute interview with a CBS crew. Mr. Rudd must have known that we had repeatedly called the network's attention to that interview and the fact that they had never used it. We wondered then, and we wonder now, whether CBS didn't use that interview because in it Mr. McGoff had so effectively belled the CBS cat.

- Rudd said a so-called citizens' group for "responsible journalism" in Escanaba had continued meeting through the year in an effort to win back some "local autonomy" (?) for our Escanaba paper. The fact is that since the committee's "media event meeting" — the one called for the convenience of CBS cameras Oct. 6 — the self-styled vigilantes have held exactly one meeting. We understand they number all of 100 or so dues paying members out of a population, in the area served by the Escanaba Daily Press, of 80,000.

CBS did manage once to capture the spirit of Escanaba during the nine minutes it devoted to that Michigan city. That was when it focused on the Escanaba high school band going through its peppy paces.

We, in Panax, are not ruffled by this kind of slapstick "reporting" anymore, we imagine, than are our colleagues in other leading newspaper organizations superficially examined in CBS's Friday night special.

Nor, normally, would we respond were it not for another reason, one which disturbs us deeply, and one which we believe must disturb all thinking Americans.

Mr. Rudd professed to feel concerned about what he called the concentration of power in too few hands over the flow of news in America. He professed this, remember, over the CBS television network.

How very interesting.

Has Mr. Rudd ever bothered to read any of the contracts which CBS inflicts upon its affiliated stations? Well, we have.

And, those contracts convert the affiliates into "slave stations" in the matter of network news. Specifically, a local station is forbidden to change so much as a bleep in a network news show.

Now that is concentration of power, concentration in the hands of the 5 or 6 persons at CBS and the other networks who shape — from afar — the news programs too many Americans rely on for basic information.

By contrast anyone even vaguely familiar with how newspapers are put together knows that it is ridiculous to imagine that the scores and scores of judgments and decisions which editors must make each and every day could be made for them from afar. The real issue here is not whether publishers, local or otherwise, ought to run their papers by remote control, but rather whether those publishers ought not also have access to the pages of the newspapers they publish.

It would appear, therefore, that it would behoove Americans to consider where the "odd and sinister" developments are actually taking place.

We believe the clear and present danger lies not within the newspaper industry, but in the concentration of power at the major television networks.

(This advertisement, paid for by Panax Corporation, is a reprint of an editorial published in the July 16, 1978 editions of Michigan's Upper Peninsula Sunday Times, a Panax newspaper.)

## CBS special on newspapers criticized

Reviews of the CBS News Special, "The Business of Newspapers," televised on July 14, were mixed in the newspaper industry.

One segment of the hour-long show (E&P, July 8) was critical of Panax Corporation and its dismissal of Dave Rood, formerly editor of the *Escanaba Daily Press*, in the wake of several controversial stories by George Bernard sent from headquarters. Hughes Rudd, the narrator, told viewers that neither Panax nor its president John McGoff would discuss the issue.

The day after the show, McGoff ordered a Panax news release which charges distortion of the facts during the special. McGoff says he was interviewed at his office in East Lansing, Mich., on July 11, 1977, for 45 minutes of which he said 26 minutes was video-taped. He says the CBS film crew, along with correspondent Betty Ann Bowser from the Chicago office of CBS, interviewed him. On July 15, 1977, the release says the CBS requested a follow-up interview which McGoff says he declined. He says Panax will be running advertisements in national newspaper publications detailing its handling by CBS. A Panax editorial was scheduled to be reproduced in all of the Panax newspapers this week.

"We, in Panax, are not ruffled by this kind of slapstick 'reporting' anymore, we imagine, than are our colleagues in other leading newspaper organizations superficially examined in CBS's Friday night special," said the editorial. The editorial goes on to criticize CBS' own concentration of power in the hands of only five or six persons at CBS and the other networks who shape—"from afar—the news programs too many Americans rely on for basic information."

Rudd also told viewers that Mason Walsh, publisher of the *Arizona Republic*, refused to be interviewed, and that the Pulliam family also declined cooperation in the CBS look at the newspaper monopoly situation in Phoenix. Walsh didn't deny that, but the *Arizona Republic* editor, Frederic S. Marquardt, wrote an editorial in the paper's entertainment section.

"The average viewer is probably more likely to remember IRE spokesman Bob Greene's statement that the Republic 'had no guts' (in not printing the IRE series). The *Arizona Republic* has plenty of guts. It also has high standards of reporting and editing," Marquardt wrote. At the last minute, in the documentary CBS added a voice-over that mentioned that the Republic finally came out with its own crime section recently.

Marquardt said the documentary made "lefthanded jabs" at newspapers. "Rudd's primary conclusion is that the business of newspapers is making money, and he doesn't like that. As a matter of fact, making money is an essential goal for any business that doesn't want to wind up in a bankruptcy court. And that goes for television and radio as well as newspapers," he wrote.

He also said that Rudd's charges of monopoly press have been around for a long time. The Republic, Marquardt wrote, runs about 65 letters a week, many of which object to the paper's policies. He said the Republic publishes more adverse columns than 95% of the nation's press. "Can you remember ever having heard CBS, or any other electronic network, giving that sort of play to 'the other side,'" Marquardt said.

In contacting a sampling of newspapers at random, E&P found that a number of publishers missed the show, but said they would have liked to have seen it. William Attwood, publisher of *Newsday*, didn't see the CBS show, but said that Donald Wright, executive vice-president and general manager, did.

"I didn't think the CBS documentary on the newspaper business was representative of the newspaper business," Wright said. "It picked some interesting spots to focus on. But the illustrations were not representative samples of the business. I think they used statistics that distorted the true picture of chain ownership. They portrayed the single ownership situation unrealistically. They question one-newspaper towns. CBS makes those towns look like a recent development. But most cities have been one-newspaper towns for a long time," Wright said.

Sal DeVivo, publisher of the *Camden (N.J.) Courier-Post*, said, "I thought the CBS show was a nice try at examining the newspaper business in a 55-minute show. Certainly the program, given the time constraints, belabored a couple of issues that could have been condensed, therefore making time available to look at some of the other matters dealing with the press. Too much time was spent on the competitive situation in Boston.

"I have no specific criticism of Hughes Rudd," DeVivo continued. "I think the segments with Al Neuhardt of Gannett and with Otis Chandler at the *Los Angeles Times* were well-done. But it would have been interesting if he would have spoken with a few other newspaper executives of their calibre to explore more in depth the point they were developing on chain ownership. I frankly think we should avoid nitpicking the CBS show, because there are some valid points in the industry that deserve analysis and dialogue," concluded DeVivo.

Anthony Mendonsa, production manager of the *Lowell (Mass.) Sun*, watched

the show and told E&P: "It didn't really turn me on. But I found it interesting. It was an idea of how television looks at the newspaper industry. I thought the show was very favorable to the *Boston Globe*, but they did a 'job,' on the *Boston Herald American*. I'm surprised at some of the statements that the people at the Herald made in light of the fact they knew they were being televised. You'd think people would think twice before they make comments to a media that shows its product all over the country. I was very depressed at the negative attitude of the people in the advertising department at the Herald."

William Parry, publisher of the *South Middlesex News*, Framingham, Mass., said, "I watched the show because a number of the Boston suburban papers had been interviewed by CBS. At first I understand that CBS was going to do a whole hour on the Massachusetts papers, but CBS didn't even mention the fact that suburban papers in Greater Boston have a considerable impact on what has happened to Boston newspapers. So therefore, Rudd's comments, while they were quite correct as they concerned the two Boston papers, probably missed the mark a lot by not saying that a lot of the circulation that has been lost in Boston has gone to some of the suburban papers."

## Reporter refuses to plea on charges

M. A. Farber, reporter, *New York Times*, declined to plead either guilty or not guilty to a charge of criminal contempt of court in Superior Court, Hackensack, N.J. on July 19.

A plea of not guilty was entered for Farber by Judge Theodore A. Trautwein, who had earlier issued a bench warrant for Farber's arrest for refusing to obey a subpoena to turn over his notes for possible use in a murder trial of Dr. Jascalevich. Farber was free on \$10,000 bail.

Since Farber lives and works in New York, the warrant, technically, did not have to be honored. So, the trial judge, William J. Arnold, requested and got a judge in New York State Supreme Court to order Farber to appear for a hearing on criminal-contempt and possible civil-contempt citation.

Farber indicated he would appear July 24, when Judge Trautwein will hold hearings on the charges.

The Times contends that the material is protected from forced disclosure by the First Amendment and New Jersey shield law.

The defense maintains that it needs the material and that Farber's refusal to turn it over infringes on his client's right to a fair trial.

EDITOR & PUBLISHER for July 22, 1978

7/27/78

Mary Ellen,

The attached two articles are from the latest edition of EDITOR AND PUBLISHER. Mr. Hetu would like them put in the PANAX visit file.

Thanks.

Karen